[INTRODUCTION]

Under-Secretary-General Acharya,
Mr Chairman, Honourable Raymond Mpundu,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to Geneva, and to the WTO.

Let me start by paying tribute to Under-Secretary-General Acharya.

It was his suggestion that we jointly organize this Fifth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries.

So let me commend him for his initiative. He just took credit for the nice weather, but I would like to note that the WTO was a co-sponsor for weather-related logistics as well.
Let me start by underlining that, I think that our discussion today is clearly in tune with the global debate.

Trade is a key element of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were agreed by global leaders last year. They recognized trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.

The Addis Ababa Agenda for Action on Financing for Development reinforces that message.

And, looking specifically at the LLDCs, the Vienna Programme of Action also features trade as a way to accelerate sustainable development.

In fact, I was pleased to be with you in Vienna in 2014 to launch the Programme of Action. And the WTO has worked closely with the UN on this front.

It is a good example of the work we do to address the concerns of the LLDCs in both our organizations.

So I am glad to strengthen that partnership today. We must continue working to ensure that LLDCs can leverage trade to help deliver on their development goals.
Clearly, due to their geographical characteristics, LLDCs face very high trade costs.

According to the World Bank, these costs can be twice as high as those of coastal countries. And so they act as a brake on the trading potential of LLDCs.

In 2014, LLDCs accounted for only around 1.2 per cent of global merchandise exports. Generally speaking, coastal countries do over 50% more trade than their landlocked neighbours.

Clearly, we must act on this.

Addressing the trade-related challenges of LLDCs requires approaching this from many angles.

International cooperation and dialogue will be key here, and I think that the WTO can keep contributing to these efforts in a number of ways.

[AID FOR TRADE]

First, through our capacity-building work, the WTO helps LLDCs address their constraints to trade.
Through our Aid for Trade initiative, the WTO has helped to mobilize resources for the LLDCs, in order to build supply capacity, strengthen trade-related infrastructure, and add value to exports.

LLDCs are a big beneficiary of this programme. In 2014, donor commitments for the LLDCs were just over 10 billion dollars. This is an increase of almost 140 per cent compared to when the initiative was launched a decade ago.

And projections by the OECD indicate that Aid for Trade flows will remain relatively stable in the coming years.

However, we must ensure that resource mobilization efforts are maintained and strengthened.

The theme of the Aid for Trade Work Programme for 2016 and 2017 is 'Promoting Connectivity'.

It looks at how we can better help developing countries connect to trade, including the LLDCs.

This work will culminate in the Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade which will take place next summer.
So I urge you to be fully involved and participate in the preparations for this next Global Review.

So capacity building is one major avenue through which the WTO can support LLDCs to trade. Another is through our work to keep updating the global trade rulebook, and agree new deals.

[BALI AND NAIROBI]

For a long time, global trade negotiations struggled to deliver concrete results. But we have started to change that.

In 2013, at our Ministerial Conference in Bali, we delivered a set of very important decisions, including the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

And this is of special interest to LLDCs.

This Agreement is about streamlining, simplifying and standardising customs procedures, thereby reducing the time and cost of moving goods across the border.

We expect that, when fully implemented, the Agreement could reduce trade costs in LLDCs by over 15 per cent on average. That's over 19
per cent for manufactured products, and over 11.5 per cent for agricultural products.

In addition, by reducing the costs associated with exporting, the Agreement will make it possible for smaller enterprises to join international markets. This will help to ensure that international trade is truly inclusive and aligned with the SDG principle that no-one should be left behind.

So these reforms will make a big difference.

The Agreement could almost have been designed specifically to address some of the major problems that LLDCs face. And that’s for a simple reason – it was designed for that purpose!

And that's because LLDCs had a prominent voice in the negotiations which led to the Agreement.

- You helped to shape the provisions.
- You helped to ensure that, under the agreement, countries should not apply their technical regulations and standards to goods in transit. This is crucial for LLDCs.
- And you also ensured that the Agreement would provide for capacity-building support to help you make the necessary reforms.
This support will be delivered by a range of partners – and we have established the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility in the WTO to ensure that everyone can access the support they need.

So, I think all of this can be very positive for LLDCs. But, in order to turn the potential benefits into reality, the Agreement must be ratified and implemented.

So far, over 80 Members have ratified this deal. The pace of ratifications has been increasing, and I hope to announce further ratifications in the coming days.

However, of the 25 LLDCs which are WTO members, so far only 9 have ratified the agreement. If all of the 16 remaining LLDCs could submit their ratifications today we would be on the verge of bringing the Agreement into force. So I encourage those of you who haven't done so yet, to complete these procedures as swiftly as possible.

The WTO is here to help. If you need anything – more information or support – just let us know. We stand ready to help wherever we can. Don't hesitate to reach out.

And of course, the Trade Facilitation Agreement isn't the only deal that WTO members have delivered in recent years.
Another major breakthrough came last December, at our ministerial meeting in Nairobi.

On that occasion, members took the historic decision to abolish agricultural export subsidies. This is the biggest reform in agricultural trade rule in the last 20 years.

Of course, there is much more to do in order to reduce distortions in agricultural markets, but this is a major step forward.

In fact, eliminating these subsidies was one element of the UN's new Sustainable Development Goals – so it is a big achievement that we delivered this, just three months after the goals were adopted in September in New York!

In addition, members agreed to find a permanent solution on Public Stockholding for food security purposes – and to develop a Special Safeguard Mechanism, which would help deal with import surges of food products that can harm domestic production.

In Nairobi, Members also took important decisions in favour of LDCs, on Cotton, and a group of members struck a deal to eliminate tariffs on a range of new generation information technology products.
Overall, these are very important outcomes for the global economy – and for the LLDCs.

So we must keep up this momentum, and keep delivering new deals.

**[FUTURE WORK]**

It is clear that all WTO members want to deliver on the core Doha negotiating issues. These issues will not go away, should not go away. They include domestic subsidies in agriculture, and improved market access for agricultural produce, industrial goods and services.

However, they do not agree on how to tackle them.

We have tried many approaches over the past couple of years, but with little progress. So we must keep trying – and we must redouble our efforts.

In addition to these issues, some members have been suggesting other issues which they would like to discuss.

These include steps to support micro, small and medium sized-enterprises (or MSMEs), investment facilitation, e-commerce, private standards, trade finance to name just a few.
Members have not yet gone into detail on what they would like to discuss under those broad headings. We need a much greater degree of specificity than we have at present.

However, members are engaged and increasingly active. And this is an opportunity to ensure that the issues that matter most to you are reflected in our negotiating agenda.

So I urge you to get engaged and stay engaged.

An area like e-commerce can be an interesting field for you to explore as LLDCs, as it can help to bridge the distance to international markets. This is particularly true in the services sector, as this form of trade is less susceptible to the constraints of being landlocked.

Trade finance is also something that has been suggested for further discussion and that could have an impact for you.

Companies, especially in LLDCs, face major hurdles in accessing financing on affordable terms. Adequate provision of trade finance could help them join markets and reap more benefits from increased trade.
However, these are just some ideas. It is up to you – the members – to flesh out these conversations, and decide what actions to take.

Nonetheless, it is encouraging that the debate has become much more dynamic. There is a real sense of rising interest and engagement in our work here – sparked by those recent successes which I have described. And a range of other constituencies have sought to make their voices heard in the debate.

In response to requests, we have facilitated meetings with the private sector and the academic community in recent weeks.

A couple of days ago, a group of members held a very well-attended workshop on enhancing the participation of MSMEs in international trade. And a similar event is being planned on e-commerce.

[CONCLUSION]

So the conversation is well underway, and it could help to shape our negotiating work for the years to come. It is time for a shift from
reflection to action – if we want results in the near future, by MC11 for example.

It is clear that members want to continue making positive efforts to better integrate developing, least developed countries and LLDCs into trading flows.

So I think we need to build on these elements of agreement – and learn from what we've done well in recent years – to can keep on delivering, and make as full a contribution as we can, as quickly as we can.

Working together, we can ensure that LLDCs can benefit more from trade, now and in the years to come.

Thank you.

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